

Extension of Remarks
U.S. Rep. Ron Lewis (KY-02)
March 6, 2007

Madam Speaker,

In times of war and in times of peace we must always show our gratitude for those who have worn the uniform of the United States military.

In the closing hours of the 109th Congress, legislation was passed a comprehensive bill, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006. Included in this good bill was a bad provision to make it easier for lawyers to be involved in the Veterans claims process at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I have introduced the *Veterans' Benefits Protection Act* to correct this mistake. Bringing lawyers whose primary goal is their own financial gain into the system will only complicate the process and lead to inequities in a system that we count on to care for those who have served. A number of Veterans in my District have raised concerns that benefits may be slowed or diminished in value.

It is no secret that there are backlog problems that need to be fixed at the VA. Serious reforms should be considered. However, bringing more lawyers into the system will not be beneficial to a majority of Veterans who are patiently waiting for claims that are owed to them by the government.

A Veteran should be able to focus on paying for medicine and other daily necessities and never need to devote a portion of benefits that are owed to pay for legal fees. Turning to a lawyer for assistance should be an option of last resort for a Veteran with claims. There are numbers of resources: individuals, Veterans organizations, and Congressional offices that offer services to assist Veterans at no cost.

I urge my colleagues to consider supporting *The Veterans' Benefits Protection Act*, repealing a process that will likely lead to inequities in payments for those who have served.